

Testimony in support of H7438
An Act Relating to Education – Children with Disabilities
House Committee on Education
February 28, 2024
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The Economic Progress Institute supports Representative Carson's H 7438, which would establish a task force, managed by the Children's Cabinet, to develop recommendations to improve access to early intervention and early childhood special education services, and appropriate \$250,000 to the children's cabinet for this purpose.

All children deserve equal access to high-quality education. For babies and young children with disabilities or developmental delays, Rhode Island's Early Intervention program - which provides free developmental and educational support for children under the age of three - is a critical piece of achieving equal access to high-quality education. Early Intervention has been proven to have lasting beneficial effects throughout a child's life with improving socioemotional development, academic performance, and employment outcomes.¹ However, babies and young children are not able to get their needs met through Early Intervention due to service delays and inadequate staffing. As of November 2023, there were over 700 infants and toddlers waiting for Early Intervention services for more than 45 days, in violation of federal and state requirements.²

A public-private early education IDEA services taskforce would develop a plan for a coherent system of educational and developmental services for babies and young children with developmental delays and disabilities. The Economic Progress Institute urges passage.

¹ <https://www.chnola.org/news-blog/2023/march/importance-of-early-intervention-as-it-relates-t/>

² <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/09/24/metro/unacceptably-long-waits-in-ri-for-early-intervention-services-for-infants-toddlers/>